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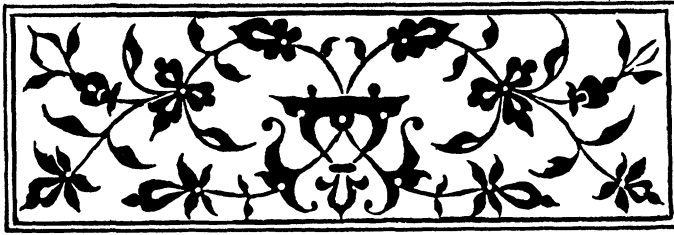
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## THE EDUCATIONAL WORK OF MUSEUMS

THE following quotations are taken from a chapter of the Report of the Commissioner of Education for the year ended June 30, 1915, and were written by Paul M. Rea, Director of the Charleston, S. C., Museum, and Secretary of the American Association of Museums. The report was designed to show the extent of educational work done by public museums of science and art, by college museums, and by museums of history.

"Visits to the museums in all parts of the United States, the discussions of the American Association of Museums at its San Francisco meeting, and the returns made to the Bureau of Education unite in conveying a strong impression of increasing interest throughout the country in the educational work of museums. This interest is manifested (1) by the enthusiasm with which leading museum workers discuss the educational side of their work; (2) by the considerable number of museums reporting a recent beginning in the educational extension work; and (3) by the apologetic tone of many reports from museums that are not doing any of this work.

"It can be stated confidently that the educational and extension work of museums is a permanent addition to education and in no sense a fad. It is not a formal system to be readily outgrown, but an idea capable of the most varied and flexible application to the changing needs of times and places. It has won recognition and appreciation by its results, and has been so large a factor in the growth and general financial support of the museums adopting

it that their continued development of it is assured.

. . . . .

"It is nevertheless true that:

(1) As yet only a comparatively small proportion of the museums in the country are thoroughly aroused to its possibilities, and these chiefly among what are designated in this report as public museums.

(2) There is a much larger opportunity for educational work among the smaller public museums, college museums, and historical-society museums than is now appreciated.

(3) The initiative in this work is usually taken by the museums, and school authorities who have not had actual experience with it are not thoroughly alive to its advantages.

(4) Museum facilities are available to schools in various localities to a very unequal degree.

"There is clearly need of some agency to stimulate and coördinate museum educational work throughout the country and to diffuse a full knowledge of it among the schools and other educational organizations. The American Association of Museums is endeavoring to do this and has appointed a special commission for museum coöperation for this purpose, while the Bureau of Education is performing valuable service in giving publicity to the work, but there is need of still more highly organized effort if the facilities which are proving so valuable in a few centers are to be made accessible to both town and rural schools throughout the country.

"The experimental period is closed. Educational work has been done as

efficiently by small museums as by great museums, in small towns as well as in great cities. Its state-wide extension among rural schools has been shown practicable. The need is for systematic encouragement of its development."

At a session of the National Education Association held at the Museum on July 6, 1916, Mr. Rea again presented the subject of the educational work of museums from the historian's point of view, saying in conclusion:

"In all of the educational activities of museums . . . the fundamental idea is visual instruction. You have only to glance at one of the traveling exhibits sent out by any of these museums to get a story so vivid that it will stay in mind the rest of your life. The value of object teaching is only beginning to be fully appreciated. The vast resources of museums both in material and in knowledge need to be mobilized as a part of our educational system. I have attempted to explain to you why this has not been done more generally in the past, emphasizing at the same time the significant beginnings which have been

made and the abundant opportunity for their extension. What is now needed is a nation-wide appreciation of the value of visual instruction as afforded by museums. This appreciation should begin with those professionally interested in education.

"Hitherto the initiative has been taken by the museums, but their tentative experiments have been so conspicuously successful that a larger share in their development ought now to be taken by the school authorities. It should be borne in mind that the museums have no desire to add new frills to the curriculum. They are actuated merely by a desire to be helpful in illustrating whatever curriculum is adopted by the schools. This can be accomplished much more effectively if planned jointly by the school and the museum authorities.

"I would therefore leave with you in closing but two suggestions: first, that educators should acquaint themselves more intimately with the educational work already accomplished by museums, and second, that closer administrative relations between schools and museums will be of mutual advantage."

